

## How to be a good listener

While you shouldn't push a person with PTSD to talk, you can let them know you're available for them. If they do choose to share, try to listen without expectations or judgments. Make it clear that you're interested and that you care, but don't worry about giving advice. Leave that to the professionals. Instead, do your best to simply take in what they're saying. Never underestimate how much the act of empathetic listening can help.

A person with PTSD may need to talk about the traumatic event over and over again. This is part of the healing process, so avoid the temptation to tell your loved one to stop rehashing the past and move on. Instead, offer to talk as many times as needed. And remember, it's okay to dislike what you hear. Some of the things your loved one tells you might be very hard to listen to. But it's important to respect their feelings and reactions. If you come across as disapproving, horrified, or judgmental, they are unlikely to open up to you again.

## Communication pitfalls to avoid

- Giving easy answers or blithely telling the person everything is going to be okay
- Stopping the person from talking about their feelings or fears
- Offering unsolicited advice or telling the person what he or she "should" do
- Blaming all of your relationship or family problems on the person's PTSD
- Invalidating, minimizing, or denying the person's experience
- Telling the person to "get over it" or "snap out of it"
- Giving ultimatums or making threats or demands
- Making the person feel weak because they aren't coping as well as others
- Telling the person they were lucky it wasn't worse
- Taking over with your own personal experiences or feelings